Native Food Crops Encyclopedia Article

Native Food Crops

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Native Food Crops

Native food crops are the crops of the world's ancient farming systems. The seeds of these cultivars have been passed down by native agriculturalists across generations and selected and preserved for local **ecosystems**. Native seeds, and the methods used to grow them, were developed for a wide range of temperatures, soil types, and precipitation without expensive, often ecologically destructive, chemicals. Many of these crops continue to be grown around the world today by traditional, indigenous farmers. They represent irreplaceable sources of genetic material to improve modern **hybrid** crops for nutrition as well as for disease and drought resistance. Examples of modern food crops that had their origin from native sources include corn, rice, chilies, potatoes, and wheat. Other highly nutritious crops such as quinoa and amaranth are becoming more common in Western diets, while ulloco (oo-yoo-ko), a wildly colored, high-altitude tuber (root crop) that was a staple of the Incas, is still relatively unknown outside of South America.

See Also

Agriculture, History Of; Bark; Cultivar; Ethnobotany; Seed Preservation; Seeds.

Bibliography

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